CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN WOMAN DRAMATISTS

by Joan Rea Boorman

With the exception of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, that remarkable seventeenth-century nun, no Latin American woman dramatist achieved, until the twentieth century, a level of quality that guaranteed her a place in the history of the theater. From approximately the 1940s on, however, hand in hand with the resurgence of dramatic production in general, women writers in several Latin American countries have been among the most significant artists producing works for the stage.[1]

Traditionally, the main centers of theatrical activity from colonial times to date were Mexico City and Buenos Aires, so it is not surprising to find high-quality plays by women in these areas. Two other countries, however, also produced women dramatists of note: Chile, quite understandably since some of the best contemporary theater has been written there, and also Paraguay, quite unexpectedly since relatively little dramatic production has come out of that small country.

Theater, being a unique mirror of a society, affords a penetrating insight into the consciousness of a people, and an understanding of their culture and mythos. In Latin America, even though contemporary drama is characterized by its diversity in both type and theme, the playwrights generally are united by a spirit of revolution which extends itself to several different areas and which reflects both esthetic and socio-political preoccupations. All types of theater are found: thesis plays (some structured within a Brechtian epic theater mold), existentialist dramas, theater of the absurd, theater of cruelty and ritual, surrealistic plays, farce—in short, interesting examples of all the major movements in contemporary theater are available. Of course, any discussion limited solely to playwrights, trends, and themes is one-sided at best, for the production of a play, its interpretation and direction, is truly the essence of theater. We can, however, within the limits imposed by the texts, study and apprehend their major thrusts, perceive and understand their deepest

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concerns. And the women dramatists considered in this study are definitely in the mainstream of contemporary Latin-American theater and, jointly, they cover virtually all of its major themes and dramatic currents.

Griselda Gambaro, after more than a decade of work, has emerged as one of Argentina's more prominent dramatists. Her plays are set in an atemporal, geographically non-specific background, although physical settings are carefully described and are integral to the plot. Being more a universalist than a nationalist, she uses a language in her plays that is not dialectal, in contrast to some of her contemporaries, nor does she rely on topical allusions to project the world she portrays.[2]

In her works, man is seen essentially as Victim, cowed into a state of submission by social and political pressures that deprive him of dignity and self-determination. The recurrent Kafkaesque patterns unfold thus: an average man, thrust into an inexplicable, frightening situation, is confronted by adversaries who may be intimates or strangers. They always turn out to be formidable opponents who victimize him to the point of complete destruction.[3]

Structurally, Gambaro follows the Artaudian dictate of Total Theater.[4] She uses gestures, movements, and noise as well as dialogue to project meaning. Violence and psychological cruelty are employed in a highly theatrical setting. Gambaro's works definitely are within the general classification of Theater of Disruption, where any action on stage, no matter how shocking, aberrant, senseless, cruel, or even insane, is justifiable as long as it serves to transmit what the dramatist feels to be the truth about life and the human condition.

Gambaro employs certain repetitive and unifying elements in all her plays. The world represented is one which depicts human conduct through pairs—e.g., husband-wife, mother-child, brother-brother, friend-friend, authority figure-subservient figure—pairs which inevitably are seen in conflict and whose relationships are perverted. Where there "normally" is love, we find hate; compassion gives way to indifference; caring becomes cruelty, etc. All of the relationships degenerate into a Tormentor-Victim pairing in which power over the victim's physical being or psyche is the motivating force. For the most part, the characters apparently are unaware of their situation. Only a lone Witness/Character, usually a person outside of the basic pairing, but occasionally the victim himself, functioning as a yardstick of sanity, is cognizant of the perversion of those surrounding him.

In *Las paredes* (*The Walls*, 1963),[5] for example, the three characters, the Youth, the Custodian, and the Official, move in a bare single set, and establish the tone of the play in the opening scene, reminiscent of Kafka's *The Trial*. The progressive demoralization of the Youth, who has been detained for reasons unknown to him, his manipulation and eventually successful brainwashing, are demonstrated in a series of scenes that are basically variations on a theme. In spite of himself, the Victim becomes the unwitting collaborator of

his tormentors. In each ensuing variation, the Youth's self-confidence is eroded, his degradation is more acute.

Even though each encounter with his tormentors is a new frustration, confusing and painful, he accepts their treatment in the hope that perhaps it will be the last time and that finally he will be set free. By the end of the play, the Youth's demoralization is complete. He has been reduced to a state of utter ineffectiveness and still has no idea why he was first detained.

The obvious socio-political symbolism of the play is mitigated somewhat by the tone and pace that Gambaro creates and maintains throughout, and by the fact that, on a philosophical level, the play also poses the question of the nature of being and of free will. In this work, obviously the pairing of the Tormentor-Victim is in the characters of the Official and the Youth and, on a less intense level, in the Custodian and the Youth. Also, here the Youth himself functions as the Witness/Character and, until his ultimate psychic disorganization and collapse, questions the absurdity of the events surrounding him. But, in the end, he—like the Witness/Characters in Gambaro's other plays—is corrupted and subverted, and moves to the side of irrationality.

In *El desatino* (*The Blunder*, 1964),[6] the opposition shifts to a family group. The theme once more is the victimization of man by man. Instead of the figures of the Youth *vs.* his tormentors, we now have a man *vs.* family and friend. The role of the victim is less abstract in this play. Alfonso is in conflict with his adversaries, Doña Viola (his mother), Luis (his best friend), and Lily (his wife). Doña Viola and Luis are active tormentors, while Lily functions on a dream level, nonetheless tormenting Alfonso psychologically. Again, Kafka seems to have been an influence. One morning Alfonso awakens to find himself immobilized by a bulky iron object that has mysteriously attached itself to his foot. Although he tries to extricate himself throughout the course of the play, appealing for help from his mother and from his best friend, it is to no avail. Both of them hesitate, delay, tease, taunt, and make excuses for not helping him; in short, they do nothing to free him from the fetters that guarantee his dependence on them. Both Doña Viola and Luis actually harm Alfonso: she, passively, by doing nothing; Luis, actively, by burning him with a cigarette and by practically choking him with a scarf while repeating ironically, "te abrigo, te abrigo."[7] The Witness/Character in this play, called simply *el muchacho* (the boy), tries to aid Alfonso, who rudely rejects his help, generating the conditions that lead to the boy's disillusionment, loss of compassion, and eventual antagonism.

Critics have interpreted the thesis of the play in various ways. As well as a portrayal of the victimization of the individual, it has been seen as a statement regarding the absurdity of the human condition, and as an allegory about contemporary Argentine or Latin American reality.[8]

In *Los Siameses* (*The Siamese Twins*, 1965),[9] the basic pairing is obvious, although the two men are Siamese twins only in a symbolic sense, tied

together, like the main characters in *Waiting for Godot*, by situation rather than flesh. Lorenzo is really Ignacio's *Doppelgänger*, his Other, different in looks (Ignacio is handsome; Lorenzo, ugly), opposite in temperament and morality (Ignacio is good, vital, outgoing; Lorenzo is bad, twisted, and impotent). Lorenzo consistently contrives to have Ignacio maltreated: first by a stranger, then by the police, finally by the father of the girl Ignacio had wanted to marry. Ignacio never accuses Lorenzo directly, although he does question the latter's actions.

The Cain-Abel parallel is carried through to Ignacio's death. Lorenzo refers to Ignacio as the incomplete, deficient member of the pair, while envying him his good nature and ability to move in the world about him with apparent equanimity. With Ignacio's death Lorenzo feels free of what he considered an obstacle and a burden. Ultimately, however, Lorenzo cannot exist without his *Doppelgänger*. As one critic has noted: "The stigma of Cain destines Lorenzo to total isolation."[10] Here the Tormentor has become the Victim. The Witness/Character in this play is a young boy who assists in the burial of Ignacio. Although Gambaro is not explicit, it can be inferred that, in the end, the boy will be corrupted by the brutality of all those around him. Having given of himself generously and spontaneously in what should have been a solemn, meaningful situation, he is abruptly disenchanted by Lorenzo's cynicism, indifference, and cruelty regarding Ignacio's death. Lorenzo is an excellent example of the complete isolation suffered by all "hero" figures, an isolation which becomes all the more acute when the "hero" is ironic in mode, perverted and sinister.[11]

In *El campo*[12] (*The Camp*, 1967), Gambaro has chosen an ambiguous title. *Campo* means either "countryside" or "camp," "place of detention." The main character is Martín, a bookkeeper who has gone to this "camp" to work. The Oppressor, Franco, a guard dressed in a Gestapo uniform, complete with whip, and Emma, clothed in prison garb, both suggest that the setting is indeed a place of detention, a concentration camp. The references by Franco to children, farm peasants, and hunters serve to confuse Martín, but remind the viewer of the cardboard cutouts the Nazis used outside of Treblinka to deceive the Jews into thinking that they were on their way to the "country" rather than to their confinement and death.

Once more, we have the Oppressor and the Oppressed, the Tormentor and the Victim. The confusion and dichotomy persist; irony abounds. As stated previously, violence and cruelty are depicted on the stage and it is all meant to be shocking, literally to jolt the audience out of a smug intellectual torpor.

The play warns of the dangers and repercussions of any form of oppression, be it political, social, intellectual, or artistic. Gambaro's theater focuses basically on man's inhumanity to man, and the subsequent dehumanization which occurs. Her use of humor, generally ironic and bordering frequently on the grotesque, as well as her use of disparate elements—physical imagery,

sound, and lights—succeeds in presenting a world view which tends to classify existence as absurd and incomprehensible.

In Chile, the development of contemporary theater has been, basically, from a theater of amateurs to one run by professionals. In this, there is a certain similarity with twentieth century Argentine theater, except that the renewed theatrical activity in Chile began in the universities rather than in independent groups (Argentina's equivalent, roughly, to Off-Broadway), and these very same students—actors, playwrights, directors, and technicians—went on to establish professional theaters. Moving away from the naturalistic theater that had dominated the boards until about the mid-thirties, these artists, inspired at times by European and American dramatic innovations but still conscious of the necessity of finding their own expression, investigated, developed, and experimented with new possibilities in dramatic form.

Students at the University of Chile and at the Catholic University formed, respectively, El Teatro Experimental (1941) and El Teatro de Ensayo (1943). The former, ITUCH, dedicated itself to the formidable task of the diffusion of classical and modern theater, the formation of a theater school, the creation of a theatrical environment, and the presentation of new dramatic and social values. The latter, TEUC, devoted itself principally to works by Chilean authors. In 1961, a new group, Teatro ICTUS, was organized, which presented avant-garde works by both foreign and national dramatists.

So we can say that in the period from 1940 to the beginning of the 1950s lie the immediate antecedents of the development that was to constitute contemporary theater in Chile. From 1955 to 1971 there was intense and dynamic theatrical activity, which established Chilean theater as one of the most significant in Latin America. Interestingly, just at the beginning of this new surge of activity there appeared on the scene three women dramatists, María Asunción Requena, Isidora Aguirre, and Gabriela Roepke, whose respective works reflect the three main concerns and tendencies of contemporary Chilean theater.[13]

The first of these, that of a re-evaluation of Chile's past, is revealed in María Asunción Requena's historical drama, *Fuerte Bulnes*[14] (*Fort Bulnes,* 1955). The play reconstructs an episode in the heroic existence of the inhabitants of the inhospitable but opulent region of Magallanes in the mid-1800s. Relying on Brechtian techniques, which, with the production of *Mother Courage* in Chile in 1953, had gained wide acceptance and appeal, Requena succeeds in transferring to the Chilean stage the dynamism and vigor of the epic theater. Later on, the dramatist re-created, in *El camino más largo*[15] (*The Longest Road,* 1959), the story of Ernestina Pérez, the first woman doctor in Chile. Her most important work, however, is *Ayayema*[16] (1964), in which she presents two worlds in crisis: contemporary man, with all of his anxieties and contradictions, *vs.* the *alacalufes*, Indians from the southernmost region of Chile, near extinction because of their own primitiveness and the invasion of

the white man's commercialism. The themes of the fatalism of the Indians, the conscious evil of the white man, and the mythic sense of the forces of good and evil are all united in the figure of Ayayema, the Indian god who represents the natural hostility of the environment. The self-interested wolf and nutria trappers from the northeast infiltrate this primitive world and open up the paths of "civilization," with the inevitable consequence being social and psychological disruption. These Indians, who before the arrival of the trappers were capable of survival in their inhospitable environment, subsequently realized that they could manage reasonably well by selling fur skins to traders and trinkets to travelers and tourists, and by receiving government subsidies.

Ultimately, alienated from their own culture by the invasion of the white man, and conscious of the probability of their own disappearance as a race because of assimilation, the Indians find themselves in a state of anguish that unbalances them both physically and morally. The forces of Ayayema, the hostile god, have prevailed, and the white man's usurption of the Indians' land and destruction of their way of life have left them divested of their former strengths.

The second tendency in contemporary Chilean theatre, that of satire and social criticism, is well represented by Isidora Aguirre. In her earlier works, she satirizes certain conventions of bourgeois existence. Her later plays, Brechtian in concept, pose certain dialectic questions and oblige the public to think and analyze basic contemporary problems. In *Población Esperanza*[17] (*Hope Village*, 1959), written in collaboration with the outstanding novelist Manuel Rojas, she investigates the world of the *callampa* villages.[18] Aguirre has tried in this play to document the hopeless and marginal lives of the squatters and the difficulty, ofttimes impossibility, of freeing themselves from their poverty.

In 1963, Aguirre wrote *Los papeleros*[19] (*The Paper Gatherers*), a further examination of a group living on the edges of the bourgeoisie. She presents a depressing picture of these men who gather up used paper from the garbage bins of the city before the regular garbage men begin their rounds. These "ex-men," as Aguirre calls them, dispossessed and alienated, have not acquired enough of a social or political conscience to make themselves heard in the "outside" world. Theirs is a grotesque microcosm of the reality that surrounds them, with the same problems, the same deformations in the political structure, the same insensitivity, the same false concepts.

A later work, *¿Quién tuvo la culpa de la muerte de María González?*[20] (*Who Was Responsible for the Death of María González?* 1970) poses the question of moral responsibility, and investigates the basic egotism of man, whatever his social standing.

The third note in Chilean theater today, a transcendentalist one, with emphasis on individual perspective, is associated with the works of Gabriela

Roepke. She was the co-founder of the Teatro de Ensayo, and active in the promotion of new plays by Chilean writers. While not ignoring national political and social problems, her works display a more metaphysical concept of the world, and their structure reflects a strong preoccupation with the generative force of language. The majority of Roepke's long plays are psychological dramas in which analyses of characters in conflict are the prime objective. Among the more important in this group are *La invitación* (*The Invitation*, 1954), *Los culpables* (*The Guilty Ones*, 1955), *La telaraña* (*The Spider's Web*, 1958), and *Juegos silenciosos*[21] (*Silent Games*, 1959). She has also written several shorter plays and one-acts which combine comedic and poetic language to portray various scenes of contemporary Chilean life, generally set during a festive celebration and depicting local types.

Josefina Plá, although born in Spain, has lived in Paraguay since 1927 and has been identified with that country's literature and intellectual life for five decades. She is a renowned ceramicist, as well as writer, with several of her pieces forming part of the permanent collections of the National Ceramic Museum in Valencia and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, among others. She has been a journalist and an editor, and has published many volumes of poetry, short stories, art history, and criticism, plus two definitive works on Paraguayan theater, *El teatro en Paraguay: de la fundación a 1870*,[22] and *Cuatrocientos años de teatro en el Paraguay: 1544-1964*.[23] Aside from the above activities, she conceived and organized the Municipal School of Theater Arts in 1948 in Asunción.

Specifically with regard to theater, Josefina Plá has published and seen performed a large number of plays written in both Guaraní and Spanish. Thematically, her plays range from realistic portrayals of the materialism, egotism, and acquisitiveness of Paraguay's "haves," as in *Raquel clamó por sus hijos* (*Rachel Cried Out for Her Children*, 1949), symbolic *autos* (allegories) dealing with Indian superstition on a mythic plane, as in *El hombre de la cruz* (*The Man of the Cross*, 1950), set at the end of the eighteenth century, reworkings of Greek tragedies, as in *Alcestes* (1951), with its patent applications to the sociological realities of twentieth-century Paraguay, and absurdist-expressionistic theater depicting the dehumanization of contemporary man in complicated bureaucratic societies, as in *Historia de un número*.[24] The theme of this play—that we are, after all, nothing more than a number, an identity card, a passport, a social security card, etc.—has been dealt with amply in the literatures of many countries, from the American Elmer Rice's *Adding Machine*, with his Mr. Zero, to the Chilean Manuel Rojas's *Hijo de ladrón* (*The Son of a Thief*), who cannot prove that he exists because he does not have an identifying number, to mention only two from this hemisphere. Paraguay, it seems, is not excepted from the problems and concerns besetting contemporary man and may, indeed, even offer a more concentrated view of those universal and interchangeable ills.

Theater in Mexico has one of the oldest traditions in all of the western hemisphere. Drama was an integral part of pre-Columbian life, and early colonial drama flourished. As previously mentioned, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz made substantial contributions, but it is only in this century that Mexican women writers have produced plays in any significant number.

Elena Garro has written several plays, two of which especially have received critical recognition. In *Un hogar sólido*[25] (*A Solid Home*, 1957), the nine characters are dead throughout the play. Logical time is disregarded. Each of the characters, from five to eighty years old, is the age he was when he died, and is dressed accordingly. The arrival of a new occupant breaks the monotony of their existence and acts as a catalyst to motivate the characters' comments on past events, their desires, fears, and disillusionment, just as if they were alive. Garro's mixture of the macabre and the poetic is reflected in her characters. Each longs for something stable and permanent—a solid home—but only finds that death is as ephemeral as life.

In 1965, under the direction of Alejandro Jodorowski, Garro presented *La señora en su balcón*[26] (*The Woman in Her Balcony*), which deals with another aspect of human disenchantment, that which results from the eternal confrontation between poetry and reality, and from the inability of most of us to reconcile the two.

Although she has been placed within absurdist theater by some, I agree with those critics who classify her works as poetic theater.[27]

Another Mexican dramatist, Luisa Josefina Hernández, began her career in the post-World War II period with plays which were realistic in form and which relied heavily for character development upon psychological analysis. She subsequently experimented with farce, comedy, tragicomedy, and theater of commitment. In general, her own dramatic development parallels the evolution of Mexican drama, from psychological realism to theater of disruption and reconstruction.[28]

Her bibliography is extensive; however, her works can be grouped into various categories. Two of her early plays, *Agonía*[29] (*Agony,* 1951), and *Botica Modelo*[30] (*The Corner Pharmacy*, 1953), both realistic in form and dealing with middle-class problems, are indicative of the subsequent development of her style that leads to *Los frutos caídos*[31] (*The Fallen Fruit*, 1955-56) and *Los huéspedes reales*[32] (*The Royal Guests*, 1958). In the former, Hernández followed the dictates of her teacher and mentor, Rodolfo Usigli, by paying careful attention to structure and balance. The play demonstrates the results of these concerns in the exposition of the main thematic thrust: the difficulty, if not impossibility, of the characters' ever overcoming their isolation from one another. The dramatist succeeds in skillfully interweaving character and theme to give a pessimistic portrayal of a Mexican middle class whose lives are empty and futile. In *Los huéspedes reales*, Hernández's interest shifts to a study of prototypical behavior based primarily on Freudian

models. The play considers the consequences of a contemporary Electra complex and thoroughly analyzes the psychological motivations of the characters.[33] Once again, Hernández sees these characters as victims of their destiny, incapable of exerting any positive influence on their circumstances.

These two works, along with several others of the same period, are all realistic in form. Hernández delves into the psyche of her characters, exposes it, and sees it affected by what it learns of itself. Consistently harsh and unsparing of her characters, Hernández is an angry writer. This anger is the common denominator of most of her works, both the early plays and her later non-realistic dramas, which become more depersonalized and concern themselves with the chasm between ideological clichés and the reality surrounding many of the dispossessed souls who live in Mexico. She attempts to demythicize the Revolution, to reveal the hollowness of the political and social slogans and the propaganda foisted on the population.

Structurally, Hernández turned to Epic Theater in an attempt more ably to portray her new concerns. Among the most significant plays of this period (1950-1960) are *La paz ficticia*[34] (*The Fictitious Peace*, 1960), *La historia de un anillo*[35] (*The Story of a Ring*, 1961), and *La fiesta del mulato*[36] (*The Mulatto's Festival*, 1966). All deal, in one way or another, with the bankruptcy of the Establishment and of *caciquismo*,[37] and the corrosive effect on the individual as he becomes increasingly entrapped in an archaic social structure. In these later plays, Hernández seems to be calling for a renewal within society, a reconstruction not only of form, but also of content.

The last woman dramatist I will consider here is Maruxa Vilalta.[38] Active as a drama critic and director as well as writer, Vilalta has been in the foreground of Mexican theater since the late 1950s. Her first play, *Los desorientados* (*The Disoriented Ones*, 1960), portrays the quest of a group of young people to discover who they are in relationship to the country in which they live, and to establish the true values on which to base their own and their country's future. Her play, *Un país feliz* (*A Happy Country*, 1964), deals with the dichotomy existing between a tourist's view of the country and the reality of the situation, which is one of political repression.

Vilalta moves from these two realistic dramas to a series of three monologues, entitled *Trio*, all written in 1964. *La última letra* (*The Last Letter*) investigates the anxieties and guilt suffered by an unsuccessful writer who must question his own creative motives over the rapidly passing years. *Un día loco* (*A Crazy Day*) studies the relativity and evasiveness of time and its effect on the human condition. In *Soliloquio del tiempo* (*Time's Soliloquy*), the protagonist, Time, analyzes the relationship between itself and human beings. The character painfully and gradually is humanized and becomes itself subject to the onslaught of time. The conclusion reached in *Trio* is that, in the final analysis, time is as much a slave of man as man is of it.

In 1965 Vilalta presented *El 9* (*Number Nine*), which deals with the total depersonalization of man by technology. The protagonist, a factory worker, Number Nine, finally rebels against the psychological and economic manipulation that is driving him towards complete anonymity. In the end he dies, crushed by his own machine, but his rebellion has regained for him his humanity and his identity. The two other characters, Number Seven and The Boy, however, do not escape. Number Seven continues working in the factory; The Boy, someday, will grow up and join the ranks of the nameless mass in the progressive mechanization of humanity.

Vilalta satirizes contemporary Mexican life through a combination of expressionistic and absurdist techniques. *Cuestión de narices* (*A Question of Noses*, 1966), criticizes war, ignorance, and prejudice in a tragicomic, farcical setting. Only love is treated seriously. In *Esta noche juntos amándonos tanto (This Night Together Loving Each Other So Much*, 1970), on the other hand, love is investigated in an ironic mode. The husband and wife are not only indifferent to all the suffering around them, they are even unconscious of the needs and feelings of each other.

In her latest play, *Nada como el piso 16*[39] (*There's Nothing Like the 16th Floor*, 1975), Vilalta again shows her characters imprisoned, not only by society but also by their own psyches. While not as bitter a comment as *Esta noche juntos amándonos tanto*, this play still demonstrates her concerns with the demoralization of man and the resultant amorality of his existence.

All in all, Maruxa Vilalta's plays also can be grouped under the broad classification of Theater of Disruption but, at least in a few of them, a plea is made for sanity and morality.

In general, the main currents of contemporary theater in Latin America are anti-mimetic. Even in works which at first glance appear realistic, there exists a world view that removes them from traditional theater. An attempt is made to present an inner as well as outer reality through the techniques of Epic Theater and Total Theater. The satires are true "anatomies" of society and look to Theater of the Absurd for much of their inspiration. More significant, however, is the fact that these women dramatists are not provincial. All of them have had one or more of their plays produced successfully outside of their native countries, in Latin America as well as in Europe and the United States.

The scope of their plays and their handling of structure place these writers within the main currents of contemporary Western theater. As Latin American theater has gained attention internationally, playwrights and producers have striven towards new levels of sophistication in play-writing and production. This has already produced theater of substance and depth, and promises to offer more in the future.

NOTES

1. Throughout, I have used the expression *Latin America* and *Latin American* because it is the most commonly used in English to designate areas of the American continent colonized by peoples with a Latin heritage (Spanish, Portuguese, French). I have confined myself in this study solely to women dramatists from Spanish-speaking countries.

2. Compare, e.g., Osvaldo Dragún or Ricardo Talesnik.

3. Sandra Messinger Cypress, "The Plays of Griselda Gambaro," in *Dramatists in Revolt*, ed. by Leon F. Lyday and George W. Woodyard (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), p. 95.

4. Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

5. *Las paredes*, copy of original manuscript at Theater of Latin America, Inc., New York, N.Y.

6. *El desatino* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual del Instituto Turcuato di Tella, 1965).

7. *Abrigar*, to cover, to wrap (as in cloth), to protect. Luis's use is ironic and sinister.

8. Cypress, "Plays of Gambaro," p. 100; Roberto Villanueva, Prologue, *El desatino*; Tamara Holzapfel, "Griselda Gambaro's Theatre of the Absurd," *Latin American Theatre Review* **4**, No. 1 (Fall 1977): 5-11.

9. *Los Siameses* (Buenos Aires: Insurrexit, 1967).

10. Holzapfel, "Gambaro's Theatre of the Absurd," p. 9.

11. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 33, discusses the diminution of the power of action of the hero in contemporary literature until he is reduced to an ironic figure.

12. *El Campo* (Buenos Aires: Insurrexit, 1967).

13. Julio Durán-Cerda, ed., *Teatro chileno contemporáneo* (Mexico: Aguilar, 1970), p. 29.

14. *Fuerte Bulnes*, unpublished copy of script at Theater of Latin America, Inc., New York, N.Y.

15. *El camino más largo*, unpublished copy of script at Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

16. *Ayayema*, in *Teatro chileno contemporáneo* (México: Aguilar, 1970), pp. 59-130.

17. *Población Esperanza*, copy of original manuscript at Universidad Católica, Santiago, Chile.

18. *Callampa*, from the Quechua *acallampa* meaning mushroom, refers to the colonies of the poor who establish their homes, which spring up overnight like mushrooms, in the uninhabited public lands in the suburbs, without any authorization.

19. *Los papeleros*, copy of original manuscript at Universidad Católica, Santiago, Chile.

20. *¿Quién tuvo la culpa de la muerte de María González?*, copy of original manuscript, personal files.

21. Copies of original manuscripts at Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

22. Josefina Plá, *El teatro en Paraguay: de la fundación a 1870* (Asunción; Ediciones Diálogo, 1967).

23. Josefina Plá, *Cuatrocientos años de teatro en el Paraguay: 1544-1964* (Asunción: Ediciones Diálogo, 1966).

24. *Raquel clamó por sus hijos, El hombre de la cruz, Alcestes*, copies of original manuscripts, personal files; *Historia de un número*, in *Teatro selecto contemporáneo hispanoamericano*,

ed. by Orlando Rodríguez Sardiñas and Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo (Madrid: Escelicer, 1971), vol. I.

25. *Un hogar sólido y otras piezas en un acto* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1958).

26. *La señora en su balcón*, production, April 1963, INBA, México D.F., México.

27. Juan Miguel de Mora, *Panorama del teatro en México* (México: Editora Latino Americano, 1970), p. 94; Frank Dauster, "El teatro de Elena Garro: evasión e ilusión," *Revista Iberoamericana* **30** (1964):81; Ruth Lamb, "Elena Garro y el teatro de lo absurdo," *El teatro en Iberoamerica* (México, 1966), pp. 115-121; George O. Schanzer, "El teatro hispanoamericano de post mortem," *LATR* 7, No. 2 (Spring 1974): 5-16.

28. In both Theater of Disruption and Theater of Reconstruction, man is depicted in a process of alienation and *anomie*. The latter, however, does hold out some hope for the future. It often calls for a reassessment of moral values to help achieve a better world.

29. *Agonía*, in *América* **65** (April-May, 1951): 95-110.

30. *Botica modelo*, in serial form in *El Nacional* (México D.F., 1953).

31. *Los frutos caídos*, in *Teatro mexicano del siglo XX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970), vol. III, pp. 403-478.

32. *Los huéspedes reales*, in *Teatro mexicano del siglo XX*, vol. IV, pp. 88-138.

33. John K. Knowles, "Luisa Josefina Hernández: The Labyrinth of Form," in *Dramatists in Revolt*, p. 135.

34. *La paz ficticia*, in serial form in *México en la cultura* (Mexico D.F.), August 28, 1960, pp. 3 and 10, and September 4, 1960, p. 5.

35. *La historia de un anillo*, in *La Palabra y el Hombre* **40** (Mexico D.F., October-December, 1966): 693-723.

36. *La fiesta del mulato*, original manuscript in author's personal files. English translation by William I. Oliver in *Voices of Change in Spanish American Theater* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), pp. 219-255.

37. *Caciquismo* originally referred to the system of rule under a *Cacique* or Indian chief. Present-day Caciques are the political bosses who run a given town or district.

38. Maruxa Vilalta, *Teatro* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972).

39. *Nada como el piso 16* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1977).